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THE ETHICS OF RELIGIOUS CONFORMITY.*

I HAVE taken as the subject of my address, to-day, the "Ethics of Religious Conformity." What I wish to discuss is the duty which the persons who form the progressive—or, to use a neutral term, the deviating—element in a religious community owe to the rest of that community; the extent to which they ought to give expression and effect to their opinions within the community; and the point at which the higher interests of truth force them to the disruption of old ties and cherished associations. There can, I think, be little doubt that this is an ethical question of much importance. But it may reasonably be doubted whether it is one with which we are here called upon to concern ourselves. I will begin by trying to remove this doubt.

(1) The aim of our Society is to be a moralizing agency; to assist "individual and social efforts after right living." Now, actually, in the world we live in, the great moralizing agencies are the Christian churches; and the most advanced thinker can hardly suppose that this will not continue to be the case for an indefinite time to come. If so, surely none can be more seriously concerned than members of an Ethical Society

* A lecture delivered to the West London Ethical Society, November 24, 1895.

that the vast influence exercised by the churches on social morality should be as pure and elevating as possible.

It is true that our work proceeds on a different basis: our principles are that "the good life has a claim on us in virtue of its supreme worth to humanity" and "rests for its justification" simply "on the nature of man as a rational and social being." But, in the view of the wiser and more thoughtful teachers in the Christian churches, this is not a basis to be rejected, though it needs to be supplemented. I will mention one or two great names. The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas has been for centuries the dominant philosophy in the Church of Rome. In the Anglican Church, and beyond its limits in England, there is no representative of orthodox Christian morality who has gained more esteem than Joseph Butler. Yet no one can doubt that in the view of Aquinas and of Butler equally it was a matter of the highest importance to show how—putting aside the Christian revelation—a life of virtue (not saintly virtue, but ordinary human virtue) might be justified on a consideration of the nature of man as a rational and social being.

Accordingly, in our Cambridge Ethical Society—though this is not, any more than yours, founded on the basis of acceptance of traditional Christian dogma—we have always invited, and, I am glad to say, obtained the co-operation of orthodox persons. It may seem, however, that this unexclusive attitude is incompatible with your express principle that the good life "rests for its justification on no external authority, and no system of supernatural rewards and punishments;" but I venture to interpret this principle as opposed not to Christian doctrine, but to a superficial and unphilosophic form of such doctrine. For in a more profound and philosophical view Divine authority is not conceived as external; it is the authority of that Universal Reason through community with which all knowledge, all truth, comes to human minds; the rewards of virtue and the penalties of vice to which Christianity looks forward in the future lives of individuals are not "supernatural;" since the conditions under which, if at all, those lives will be lived are conditions forming part of one system

of nature—a system deriving its unity from the One Mind which is its ground. I am far from imposing this as an authoritative interpretation of your formula, but I trust I am right in regarding it as an admissible interpretation: since it is in this view of the scope of your principles that I accepted the honor of being your President, and of addressing you here to-day.

For while I have always sympathized with the movement that has led to the formation of Ethical Societies here and in America, I have always held that they ought to maintain, and I hope that they always will maintain, towards the churches an attitude of fraternal sympathy, without either conflict or competition. The work that the churches are doing, with their vast resources and traditional influence over men's minds, is work in the efficacy of which we must always be keenly interested; while any work that we may accomplish in our little measure, towards the realization of our avowed aims, is work which the thoughtful among them will equally desire to be well done—though, of course, in *their* view it cannot be by itself adequate for the guidance of life.

It is, then, in this spirit that I address myself to the subject that I have announced.

The student of history sees that hypocrisy and insincere conformity have always been a besetting vice of religions, and a grave drawback to their moralizing influence, after the first period of ardent struggle is over and they have attained a stable position of power and influence over men's minds. Indeed, we may say that in the popular classification of professional failings, just as lying is the recognized vice of diplomatists, chicanery of lawyers, solemn quackery of physicians, so hypocrisy is noted as the temptation of priests and of laymen who make a profession of piety. And in most of these cases, on the margin of the vice, there is a region of doubt and difficulty for persons desiring to do what is right: it is not easy to say exactly how far a diplomatist may legitimately go in concealing state secrets, or a lawyer in using his professional skill to defeat justice. It is on this margin of doubt and difficulty, in the case of religious conformity, that I wish now to concen-

trate attention. With the vice of hypocrisy, so far as it is conscious and unmistakable, I am not concerned. The thorough-paced hypocrite—

“ Who never naming God except for gain
So never took that useful name in vain ”—

we may leave to popular censure,—which is, perhaps, at the present time, sufficiently active in reprobating him. It is the excusable hypocrisy, the well-meant pretence of belief—the region not of vice, but of error in judgment, if error there be—that I wish now to examine.

And here I may pause to note another aspect in which the question I am raising interests us as an Ethical Society. For I conceive that it is largely a sense of the value of the churches as moralizing agencies—as supplying both in their regular common worship and their weekly discourses, an assistance to individual and social efforts after right living—which leads men who do not really believe all the doctrines formally adopted by their church to cling to it in spite of intellectual divergence; and even, perhaps, in some cases to hold office in it and preach in its pulpits. They feel that the teaching received by them in childhood from their church or under its guidance has made them better men than they would have been without it; and they wish their children to be brought up under similar beneficent influences. Without denying that there are good men and women outside the churches, they think that—taking a broad and general comparison of the religious and the irreligious—the conditions and habits of life of the latter are, on the average, manifestly less favorable to morality than those of the former. They think, therefore, that separation from the church would be—from an ethical point of view—a greater evil than a more or less suppressed intellectual disagreement with some of the doctrines in the creeds that they allow themselves to appear to believe.

The question then is, Are they right, and if so why? I need hardly explain, after what I have already said, that I propose to treat this question merely from an ethical point

of view, and not at all as a theological question. Doubtless, in an age like the period immediately following the Reformation,—when Christians still believed almost universally that there was some one ecclesiastical organization and some one system of doctrines to which the Divine favor was exclusively attached, but were profoundly disagreed as to which organization or system enjoyed this privilege,—any but a theological treatment of these topics would naturally seem idle. The inquiry then, could only be, what degree of variation from the true standard involved deadly error. Even now, it may be held by some, that if a man has the misfortune to hold erroneous opinions, he ought to keep them to himself, and outwardly appear to believe what he does not believe, rather than aggravate his guilt by the open rejection of saving truth. Or, they may hold that such a heretic must do wrong, whatever he does; he is in the miserable dilemma of being either a hypocrite or a schismatic, and it is an unedifying exercise in casuistry to discuss which is worst. On the other hand, men may still believe vaguely that the favor of heaven rests in some mysterious and supernatural way on a particular religious community, even though they may be unable to accept its distinctive theological opinions; or, rather, though they may have renounced most of its dogmas, but not the one dogma that asserts the peculiar salvatory efficacy of its discipline. To minds in any of these attitudes I do not attempt to appeal. Indeed, the mere statement of these views—though I believe them to be actually and perhaps even widely held—suffices to show how opposed they are to the general movement of thought in the present age—among Protestants, at least—both within and without the churches. On the whole, the recognition of the necessity of free inquiry and the respect for conscientious difference of opinion is now so general among thoughtful persons that I believe such persons—whether orthodox or not—are prepared to regard my question as one to be determined on ethical principles common to all sects and schools.

It is necessary, however, to separate this question from another one, that in many minds blends with it and predominates

over it. It is very difficult for men in any political or social discussion to keep the ideal quite distinct from the actual, and not sometimes to prescribe present conduct on grounds which would only be valid if a distant and dubious change of circumstances were really certain and imminent. It is peculiarly difficult in discussing the conditions of religious union for in theology an ardent believer, especially if his beliefs be self-chosen and not inherited, is peculiarly prone to think that the whole world is on the point of coming round to his opinions. And hence the religious persons who, by the divergence of their opinions from the orthodox standard of their church, have been practically led to consider the subject of this lecture, have often been firmly convinced that the limits of their church must necessarily be enlarged at least sufficiently to include themselves; and have rather considered the method of bringing about this enlargement, than what ought to be done until it is effected. But when we survey, impartially, the development of religious thought from the Reformation to the present time; when we observe how the varieties of beliefs throughout the civilized world have continually increased, the interval between the extremes widening, and the intermediate opinions, or shades of opinion, becoming more numerous; when we see how little the outward organization, symbols, and formulas of the different religious communities have been affected by the discoveries of science or the changes of philosophy, or the successive predominance of novel ideas, novel hopes and aspirations, in the political and social spheres—we shall feel it presumptuous to prophesy that any revolution is now impending in the nature, extension, and mutual relations of the recognized creeds of Christendom so great as to render a discussion like the present unnecessary.

Here, however, it may perhaps be said, "granting the question to be still one of practical importance, it is not one of fresh interest; it is surely an old question which must have been raised and settled—so far as ethical discussion can settle it—long ago." My answer is that the change of thought to which I just now referred—the movement in the direction of wide toleration,—materially alters the conditions of the ques-

tion ; for this movement at once introduces a new danger and imposes a new duty. On the one hand, there is a danger that the disposition to tolerate and respect even widely divergent opinions, when held with consistency, clearness, and sincerity, may degenerate into a disposition to think lightly of conscious inconsistency and insincerity, and so to tolerate the attitude of sitting loose to creeds. On the other hand, every step society takes towards complete civil and social equality of creeds really diminishes the old excuse for lax and insincere conformity. Further, though the toleration of which I have spoken has, like other drifts of current opinion and sentiment, baser and nobler elements, its best element consists of the growing predominance of the love of truth over mere partisanship in theological controversy, which leads to a comprehensive effort after mutual understanding among persons who hold conflicting opinions. As a result of this we find, among the best representatives of orthodoxy, a temperate dogmatism which holds opinions firmly and earnestly, and yet is able to see how they look when viewed from the outside, and to divine by analogy how the opinions of others look when viewed from the inside ; and this attitude carries with it a legitimate demand for respectful frankness on the part of their opponents.

And this demand is continually strengthened by the growing influence of positive science as an element of our highest intellectual culture. I do not refer to any effect which the progress of science may have had in modifying theological opinions ; but rather to the necessity, which this progress lays with ever increasing force on theologians, of accepting unreservedly the conditions of independent thought which in other departments are clearly seen to be essential to the very life of knowledge. This is a necessity of which the recognition is quite independent of any particular view of theological method or conclusions. It is sometimes said that we live in an age that rejects authority. The statement, thus unqualified, seems misleading ; probably there never was a time when the number of beliefs held by each individual, undemonstrated and unverified by himself, was greater. But

it is true that we are more and more disposed to accept only authority of a particular sort; the authority, namely, that is formed and maintained by the unconstrained agreement of individual thinkers, each of whom we believe to be seeking truth with single-mindedness and sincerity, and declaring what he has found with scrupulous veracity, and the greatest attainable exactness and precision. In respect of theologians of an earlier generation, it was difficult to feel such security, owing to the one-sided stress which they were accustomed to lay on the imbecility of the inquisitive intellect, the inadequacy of language to express profound mysteries, and the unedifying effect of truth upon an unprepared audience. It is because a change is taking place in this respect; because among the most orthodox theologians there are men imbued with the best qualities of the scientific spirit; because the tide of opinion is moving in this direction, and the conviction is daily growing among earnestly religious Protestants of all shades that the exceptional protection that has been claimed for theological truth is a fatal privilege; that the time seems to me opportune for a fresh discussion of this subject. If English Protestants accept as a fact, which they cannot rapidly alter, that the divergence of religious beliefs, conscientiously entertained by educated persons, is great, is increasing, and shows no symptom of diminution; if they admit the principles of complete toleration and complete freedom of inquiry; if they also admit the growing demand of educated laymen, that when they are instructed on matters of the highest moment they should feel the same security which they feel on less important subjects that their teacher is declaring to them truth precisely as it appears to him—then surely the old question as to the nature and limits of the duty of religious conformity may reasonably be examined afresh in the light of these considerations.

Now I find two views—opposed to each other but both somewhat widely spread—which stand in the way of a full and frank discussion of this question. It is said that the question is so simple that it is not worth while discussing it at any length; an honest man can easily settle it on the principles of

ordinary morality. Again, it is said that the question is so difficult and complex, and the right solution of it dependent on so many varying conditions, that it had better be left entirely to the conscience of the individual, which can take account of his special nature and circumstances. The truth seems to me to lie between these two extremes. On the one hand, I do not myself think it very difficult to find the right general answer to the question: at the same time I do not think it—for the persons whom it practically most concerns—quite a simple answer: I think it requires both impartial sympathy and careful distinctions to conceive and state it accurately. On the other hand, I think that the best general answer that we can obtain is not one that by itself gives decisive guidance to any individual: it leaves, and must leave, much to be determined by the varying views and sentiments and varying circumstances of different individuals: at the same time I think that we ought to confine these variations—in determining the conduct to which moral approval is to be given—within somewhat narrower limits than those within which the practice of well-meaning persons actually ranges.

The argument of those who treat the question as a simple one may be briefly given thus. A church is an association of persons holding certain distinctive doctrines; not necessarily theological doctrines, since the essential differences between one church and another may relate to questions of ritual or of ecclesiastical organization rather than to questions strictly theological, but in any case doctrines or beliefs of some kind. An individual belongs to a church because he holds these distinctive doctrines; or at any rate because he once held them, and his intellect has not yet decisively rejected any important part of them, though it may be in a state of doubt and suspense of judgment on some points. It would be generally granted that, so long as he remains merely doubtful and wavering, he is right in maintaining his old position. But—according to this view—as soon as he has made up his mind against any important doctrine explicitly adopted by his church, it is proper for him to withdraw. Or at any rate—

for I do not wish to state the view in the most extreme form—this withdrawal is a clear duty in the case of any church which exacts, as a condition of admission to the privileges of membership, an express declaration of adhesion to certain doctrines selected as fundamental in the teaching of the church.

This view of the basis of religious association cannot, I think, be rejected as an inadmissible view: we cannot say that an individual does wrong in holding and acting on it. I should go further and say that it is the most natural and obvious view to take. But it would, I think, be a grave mistake to impose it as the only view ethically admissible.

First, the view clearly does not correspond to the actual facts—the actual basis of common understanding on which a church, in modern society, holds together. It is not only that the members of such a body do not always withdraw when they have ceased to hold any of its fundamental doctrines; but it is not expected that they should withdraw: they violate no common understanding in not withdrawing.

And this is because feelings that every one must respect make it impossible for a man voluntarily to abandon a church as easily as he would withdraw from a scientific or philanthropic association. The ties that bind him to it are so much more intimate and sacred, that their severance is proportionally more painful. The close relations of kinship and friendship in which he may stand to individual members of the congregation, present obstacles to severance which all, in practice, recognize, if not in theory; but even to the community itself, and its worship, he is still bound by the strong bands of hereditary affection, ancient habit, and, possibly, religious sympathies outliving doctrinal agreement. Let us grant that these considerations ought not to weigh against disagreement on essential points. The question remains, Who is to be the judge of essentiality? For a common case—probably the commonest at the present day—is when the point at issue, though selected as fundamental by the church, is not so regarded by the divergent individual: it may very likely appear to him to possess no religious importance whatsoever, and

therefore to give him no personal motive for secession. A man who feels no impulse to leave a community, and sees no religious or moral gain in joining any other, can hardly be expected to excommunicate himself; others, sympathizing with his motives, shrink from excommunicating him; and thus "multitudinism"—as it has been called—creeps tacitly into churches whose bond of union is *primâ facie* doctrinal. And the principle thus admitted receives a continually widening application: until from the mere fact that a man is a member of a religious body we can draw no inference whatever as to his beliefs, even in the case of a generally upright and conscientious man, and even though the body to which he professedly belongs has a perfectly definite and express basis of theological doctrine.

Are we then to admit this result as legitimate, or are we to regard it as a concession to human weakness, inevitable in fact so long as men are weak, but to be firmly rejected in determining the moral ideal? The reason, in my opinion, for adopting the former alternative is that the service which religion undeniably renders to society lies primarily in its influence on the moral and social feelings, and that Multitudinism tends to keep this influence alive in many cases in which a strict Doctrinalism would tend to destroy it. If a man severs himself from the worship of his parents and the religious habits in which he has grown up, he will, in many cases, form no new religious ties, or none of equal stability and force: and in consequence the influence of religion on his life will be liable to be impaired, and with it the influence of that higher morality which Christianity, in all our churches, powerfully supports and inspires; so that his life will in consequence be liable to become more selfish, frivolous, and worldly, even if he does not lapse into recognized immorality. I need hardly say that I do not regard this as an inevitable result of breaking away from an inherited creed and worship. I do not even say that it is to be expected in a majority of cases. Many are saved from it by devotion to a non-religious ideal—to science or social progress; others by the bracing effect of onerous duties faithfully discharged; others by intense and

elevating personal affections. But—though I have no means of estimating the proportion with any exactness—I am disposed to think that this moral decline is to be feared in a number of cases sufficient to constitute it a grave danger.

Here I would note, because it is apt to be overlooked, one moral advantage of membership of a church for ordinary men,—which remains even when the authoritative creed of the church no longer seriously affects their belief as to the moral order of the world,—namely, that it constrains them, gently but effectively, to a regular and solemn profession of a morality higher than their ordinary practice. This may sound a paradox; since the gap between Christian professions and Christian practice is one of the tritest themes of modern satire. And I quite admit that for men deliberately and contentedly false to their avowed standard of duty, the express acceptance of this standard is no gain but a loss: they merely add the evil of hypocrisy to the evil of vice or selfish worldliness. But the case is otherwise with the average well-meaning persons who are numerically most important: however much their practice may fall below their professions, it is higher than it would have been if they had not, by professions not consciously insincere, given their fellow-men the right to try them by the exacting standard of Christian duty.

I need not labor this point here: since surely a leading motive for the formation of ethical societies is the desire to gain, for oneself and for others, the moral support to be derived from sharing in the social expression of lofty ethical aims and interests.

For these reasons I think that in defining the moral obligation of church-membership it is right and wise to admit what I have called Multitudinism, and concede to it as much as can be conceded without violating the principles of Veracity and Fidelity to promises.

Now probably you would allow me, if I wished, to assume that the rules of Veracity and Fidelity to promises are rules to be obeyed at all costs: that the evils of violating them at all are graver than all the trouble and disturbance and pain that may be caused by strict adhesion to them. But this is

not exactly my own view, and I wish here to explain my position with perfect frankness and precision. I am on ethical questions an utilitarian ; I think that these and other virtues are only valuable as means to the end of human happiness ; and when I examine the matters discussed for ages by casuists, I find exceptional cases in which I have to approve of un-
veracity. For instance, I should not hesitate to lie to a murderer in pursuit of his victim ; nor—if I thought it prudent—to deceive a burglar as to the whereabouts of the family-plate. And there have been ages of violent and inquisitorial religious persecution, when it was excusable, though not admirable, in a heretic to keep his view of truth a secret doctrine, and simulate acceptance of the creed imposed by fire and sword. But in an age like the present, when even aggressive atheism has in England been found no bar to a political career and parliamentary success, the last shadow of this excuse for un-
veracity has vanished.

But again, I admit cases in which deception may legitimately be practised for the good of the person deceived. Under a physician's orders, I should not hesitate to speak falsely to save an invalid from a dangerous shock. And I can imagine a high-minded thinker persuading himself that the mass of mankind are normally in a position somewhat analogous to that of such an invalid : that they require for their individual and social well-being to be comforted by hopes and spurred and curbed by terrors that have no rational foundation. Well, in a community like that of Paraguay under the Jesuits, with an enlightened few monopolizing intellectual culture and a docile multitude giving implicit credence to their instruction, it might be possible—and for a man with such convictions it might conceivably be right—to support a fictitious theology for the good of the community by systematic falsehood. But in a society like our own, where every one reads and no one can be prevented from printing, where doubts and denials of the most sacred and time-honored beliefs are proclaimed daily from house-tops and from hill-tops, the method of pious fraud is surely inapplicable. The secret must leak out ; the net of philanthropic un-
veracity must be spread in the sight of the

bird; the benevolent deceiver will find that he has demoralized his fellow-men, and contributed to shake the invaluable habits of truth-speaking and mutual confidence among them, without gaining the end for which he has made this great sacrifice. The better the man who sought to benefit his fellow-men in this strange way, the worse, on the whole, would be the result; indeed, one can hardly imagine a severer blow to the moral well-being of a community than that that element of it which was most earnestly seeking to promote morality should be chargeable with systematic unverity and habitual violation of solemn pledges, and be unable to repel the charge.

I conclude, then, that while we should yield full sympathy and respect to the motives that prompt a man to cling to a religious community whose influence on himself and others he values, even though he has ceased to hold beliefs which the community has formally declared to be essential; and while we should concede broadly the legitimacy of such adhesion; still all such concessions must be strictly limited by the obligations of Veracity and Good Faith.

This conclusion, however, is somewhat vague and general. I will try to make it rather more definite,—but much must always be left to the varying sentiments and judgments of individuals, and it is an important gain to get the principle clear. In illustrating its application, I will consider first the case of pledges expressly taken on admission to membership. Here I should understand my principle to mean that the obligation to believe what a man has pledged himself to believe should be held as sacred as any other promise, but that as broad an interpretation as is fairly admissible should be put on the terms of the pledge. In determining this I hold it reasonable to be largely guided by common understanding. This is not always easy to ascertain, but if an individual is in doubt, any serious danger of bad faith may usually be avoided by making his position clear to others who do not hold his views. The important point is that he should neither betray the confidence reposed in him by others, nor give them fair reason for believing that he holds opinions which he does not hold.

I may make this clearer by taking a particular example: and

I will select the case of the Church of England, both because it is practically for us the most important case, and because in an established church with a prescribed form of worship and an elaborate official creed more than three centuries old, the difficulties of the present question reach their maximum. Now there can be no doubt that a member of the Church of England is formally pledged to believe the Apostles' Creed. But it is clearly impossible to take this pledge literally. If it comes into conflict with the obligation to believe what appears to a man true, it can be no more binding than any other promise that conflicts with a definite prior duty. Can we say, then, that in the case of such conflict there is an implied pledge to withdraw? This is, I think, the most natural view to take, and, for a long time, I thought it difficult or impossible to justify morally any other view. But as the pledge to withdraw is at any rate only implied, and as the common understanding, of orthodox and unorthodox alike, gives the implication no support, I now think it legitimate to regard the obvious though indirect import of the verbal pledge as relaxed by the common understanding. At the same time, considering how necessarily vague and uncertain this appeal to a tacit common understanding must be, and how explicit and solemn the pledge taken is, I do not think any one who is a candidate for any educational or other post of trust, in which membership of the English Church is required as a condition, ought to take advantage of this relaxation without making his position clear to those who appoint to the post; so as to make sure that they, at any rate, are willing to admit his interpretation of it. I do not mean that such a person is bound to state his theological opinions,—I think no one should be forced to do that,—but I think he ought to state clearly how he interprets his pledge to believe the Apostles' Creed.

I might pursue this question into much more detail; but this kind of casuistry is apt to weary, unless it is pursued for the practical end of personal choice or friendly counsel; and I am anxious not to seem to dogmatize on points on which I should readily acquiesce in minor differences of judgment. I pass on, therefore, to examine the obligation implied in taking

part in a form of worship,—especially one which, like that of the Church of England, includes the recital of one or more creeds. Here, however, I think that the only practical question admitting of a precise general answer relates not to the duty of a private member of the church, but to the duty of its appointed teachers. For the mere presence at a religious service—by a clear common understanding—does not imply more than a general sympathy with its drift and aims: it does not necessarily imply a belief in any particular statement made in the course of it, as an ordinary member of the congregation is not obliged to join in any such statement unless he likes. And how far it is desirable that an individual should take any part in a social act of religious worship, while conscious of a certain amount of intellectual dissent from the beliefs implied in the utterances of the worship, is a question which may properly be left to be decided by the varying sentiments of individuals: the effect of public worship on the worshipper is so complex and so various, that it would be inexpedient to attempt to lay down a definite general rule. The minds of some are so constituted, that it would be a mockery to them to take part in a service not framed in exact accordance with their theological convictions; to others, again, quite as genuinely religious, but more influenced by sympathies and associations, the element of intellectual agreement appears less important.

The case of the teacher, the officiating minister, is different; for on him the imperative duty falls—in the Church of England—of solemnly declaring his personal belief in the fundamental doctrines of the church, as stated in the creeds. And here, I think, we come to a point at which the efforts made for more than a generation in England to liberalize the teaching of the English Church, and to open its ministry to men of modern ideas, must find an inexorable moral barrier in the obligations of veracity and good faith. For the minister who recites any one of the precise and weighty statements of the creeds, while conscious of not really believing it, can hardly be acquitted of breaking both these rules of duty at once; since he states solemnly that he believes a theological proposition which he has given an express pledge to believe and

to teach, and stating this falsely, breaks his pledge,—a pledge which in his case no common understanding can, I think, be held to have relaxed. I believe that there are men who do this, and do it with the best intentions, and with aims and purposes with which we shall all here sympathize; but the more we sympathize with them, the more it becomes our duty to urge—from the purely ethical point of view which we here take—that no gain in enlightenment and intelligence which the Anglican ministry may receive from the presence of such men can compensate for the damage done to moral habits and the offence given to moral sentiments by their example. Let me not be misunderstood. I should desire and think right that in determining the scope of the obligation imposed by the creeds, the utmost breadth of interpretation should be granted, the utmost variety of meanings allowed which the usage of language, especially the vagueness of many fundamental notions, will fairly admit. Christianity, in the course of its history, has adapted itself to many philosophies; and I do not doubt that there is much essentially modern thought about the Universe, its End and Ground and Moral Order, which will bear to be thrown into the mould of these time-honored creeds. But there is one line of thought which is not compatible with them, and that is the line of thought which, taught by modern science and modern historical criticism, concludes against the miraculous element of the gospel history, and in particular rejects the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus. I would give all sympathy to those who are trying to separate the ethical and religious element in their inherited creed from the doubts and difficulties that hang about the “thaumatological” element, and so to cherish the vital ties that connect the best and highest of our modern sentiments and beliefs, religious and moral, with the sacred books and venerable traditions of Christianity. It is not a work in which I am personally able to take part for more than one reason; but I think it a good work and profitable for these times. But it is work that cannot properly be done within the pale of the Anglican ministry. Let them build their edifice of ideas, old and new, and make it as habitable

as they can for the modern mind; but, for the sake of the ethical aims which we and they have in common, let them not daub it with the untempered mortar of falsehood and evasion of solemn obligations.

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THE MORAL ASPECTS OF SOCIALISM.

THE following considerations upon modern Socialism are suggested by the book entitled "Some Aspects of the Social Problem." * Justice has already been done to its remarkable merits in the pages of this JOURNAL: it is certainly a noteworthy and impressive contribution to the philosophy of Social Reform, and, from the authority of the writers, commands the greatest respect. But I cannot help thinking that, in spite of explicit declarations to the contrary, its tendency is one-sided, and to a certain extent misleading,—more particularly, it seems to me to misrepresent both the aims and methods of modern Socialism or Collectivism. It does recognize a theoretical distinction between a higher and lower conception of Socialism, but the idea of Socialism it habitually uses is generalized from the lower. It may be granted that a philosophical interpretation of Socialism was not within the scope of the essayists, and that they were within their rights in taking Socialism "as it is spoke," and sometimes written: that the "idolon" rather than the "idea" of Socialism was sufficient for their purposes. Still, the power of discrimination has generally been held to be a note of philosophy; and it surely could not have been the bias of philosophy which has led Mr. Bosanquet and Miss Dendy to group together under a common denomination such heterogeneous tendencies as "the organization of industry" and the extension of out-

* "Aspects of the Social Problem." Edited by Bernard Bosanquet. Macmillan & Co., 1895. (Noticed in October number, 1895.)